

The soft stacks of crushed dried sugarcane had apparently been utilised by the Bank Myna population for nesting in the area for want of the usual mud banks in the plain, tube-well-

irrigated countryside. The improvised nesting site speaks highly of the adaptability of the species.

NORTHERN REGIONAL STATION,
ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,
13, SUBHAS ROAD,
DEHRA DUN,
March 24, 1980.

B. S. LAMBA

13. THE 'BALLING' OF CROWS

The two of us were waiting at the Manali bus stand (Distt. Kulu, Himachal Pradesh) on 6th October 1980 for the bus for Delhi to leave. The time was 5-15 p.m. and a warm afternoon sun slanted over the western mountains to light up the autumnal glow of high altitude broad-leaved forests against a lovely sky full of expressive clouds in the wake of the previous few days of rain and cold.

Suddenly there was a tumultous noise of more than three hundred large crows circling effortlessly with considerable grace above us. The spectacle of their aerial mastery was breathtaking! The circling mass of sleek black birds seemed to have located a late afternoon

thermal and they rapidly spiralled high up almost to become specks. Here they collected into a tight rotating mass of birds in the manner of 'balling' House Swifts. After a couple of minutes of this singular manouvre the birds separated and the flock drifted towards some Deodars high up on the eastern mountain slopes.

A roosting flock? A wintering group just arrived? One of our members Mr. Suresh Jain had found a dead crow the skin of which was brought to the Society for identification. It was identified as the jungle crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*.

14 JAYANT SOCIETY,
RAJKOT 360 004.

LAVKUMAR KHACHER

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
HORNBILL HOUSE,
BOMBAY 400 023,
November 14, 1980.

NARESH CHATURVEDI

14. OCCURRENCE OF THE REDHEADED BUNTING (*EMBERIZA BRUNNICEPS* BRANDT) IN BOMBAY

March 2, 1980 while watching birds with Humayun Abdulali at the Golf Course in Colaba.

A yellow sparrow-sized bird was flushed almost underfoot. As H.A. turned to look it

flew away towards a clump of trees. The brief glimpse was enough to elicit a guess of 'finch or bunting' from him. We followed and came upon three feeding almost hidden in grass three or four inches high. We were able to

observe them at leisure. Not all of them had the same intensity of chestnut on the head and on the chin and bib. There were another five feeding a little further on. They all had some yellow on the undersides. Those with brighter chestnut heads had a stronger shade of yellow underneath. The beak was distinctly conical and the tail slightly but noticeably forked.

H.A. was almost certain it was the Red-headed Bunting and the following day he confirmed the identification stating that the:

The Redheaded Bunting (*Emberiza bruniceps* Brandt) is a winter visitor to India, fairly common in Gujarat and in the Deccan as far south as Cudappah, Mysore and Coimbatore. There are, however, no records of this species from the Bombay area where

the Blackheaded Bunting (*E. melanocephala* Scopoli) with which it is often associated, is common particularly in the Konkan during February and March.

On March 4, one Redheaded Bunting was seen in the same area. It was not shy. The yellow rump was easily visible when it hopped onto a water pipe. When feeding on the ground the yellow rump is concealed by the folded wings. Further away towards the seaward end of the Course a party of thirteen was seen. Four had rich chestnut heads, the colour extending below the chin into an untidy bib. The rest were grey-brown near the beak and fading into a dull grey at the outer limits of the crown and throat but all showed some yellow below. Seven were seen in the same area on April 11, and four on May 6.¹

12 REVATI,
NAVY NAGAR,
COLABA,
BOMBAY 400 005,
June 10, 1980.

JASJIT MAN SINGH

¹ As a postscript the birds have been again found in the same area in March 1981 on two occasions—in groups of three and four.

15. AGE AT ONSET OF SEXUAL MATURITY IN MALE INDIAN MUGGER (*CROCODYLUS PALUSTRIS*, LESSON) REARED UNDER IDEAL HUSBANDRY CONDITIONS IN CAPTIVITY

INTRODUCTION

Captive crocodiles maintained under ideal husbandry conditions show extremely rapid growth (see below and Bustard, Singh & Choudhury, in press). It might be expected that this would lead to early onset of sexual maturity. Whitworth (1971) cites an instance of a female alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) which exhibited an extremely rapid rate of growth in captivity, and mated, nested and produced eggs at 4 years of age, i.e. over five

years younger than the normal age of sexual maturity in the wild (McIlhenny 1934 and Cott 1961). Joanen and McNease (1975) also concluded that in the alligator sexual maturity is dependent on size rather than age, and Nichols & Chabreck (1980) consider that enhanced feeding, leading to much faster growth, can result in earlier breeding in the alligator.

This paper investigates the relationship between growth rate and attainment of sexual maturity in a crocodile species—the Indian mugger (*C. palustris*).